(a) whether it is a fact that SAIL lost some Rs. 600 crores in dubious deals as reported in The Pioneer dated 19th September, 1996;

(b) whether certain parties were favoured for extraneous reasons; and

(c) whether these parties sold Indian steel at well below world prices?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL & MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Purchase of wheat and rice by the exporters from FCI in Maharashtra

1804. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the number of applications received by FCI for purchase of wheat and rice from the exporters from Maharashtra for export sales under open market sales scheme during 1995-96 and till date with details thereof;

(b) number of exporters who got releases of wheat and rice from FCI during the said period;

(c) whether some applications were also rejected;

(d) if so, the details and reasons therefor; and

(e) whether Government propose to continue the exports of wheat and rice from the country?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) 16 applications for purchase of wheat and 9 applications for purchase of rice were received alongwith the requisite amount of Earnest Money Deposit by the FCI for sale of wheat and rice under its Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) for export during 1995-96 from exporters having their office or establishment located in Maharashtra.

(b) to (d) Applicants, after fulfilment of the prescribed terms and conditions by them, were allotted quantities for the purpose of export depending upon availability of rail rakes, time schedule for export etc. 5 out of the 16 applicants for purchase of wheat and all the 9 applicants for purchase of rice were allotted wheat and rice. The quantity of wheat allotted during 1995-96 and 1996-97 was 0.82 lakh tonnes and 0.35 lakh tonnes respectively. Since the procurement of wheat for the Central Pool during 1996-97 rabi marketing season has been less by about 4 million tonnes compared with the procurement in the previous year, a quantity of 5 lakh tonnes of wheat against the carryover commitment made during 1995-96 only was authorised for export/sale for the purpose of export from Central Pool during 1996-97 and therefore, all the applicants could not be allotted wheat for the purpose of export.

(e) As per the current EXIM Policy, while export of both basmati and non-basmati rice is allowed freely without any quantitative or Minimum Export Price (MEP) restrictions, export of wheat is allowed subject to export ceilings released from time to time.

However, while considering export of foodgrains from the Central Pool various factors such as production, internal availability, price trend, crop prospects, stock position and requirement of the Public Distribution System and other Welfare Schemes etc., have to be taken into account.